

Visitors & Evacuations

As noted previously, hurricanes are the most common reason evacuations are ordered in Santa Rosa County. We ask visitors to understand orders can be issued at anytime for other types of disasters that will impact our area to insure the safety of residents and visitors alike. When evacuation notices are given, visitors like our residents, must also adhere to evacuation guidelines and immediately travel inland to stay with relatives, friends, shelter or a hotel outside of the evacuation zone. In the event an evacuation is ordered, emergency management officials will work with the Santa Rosa County Tourist Development Council to communicate the need for visitors to leave for their safety.

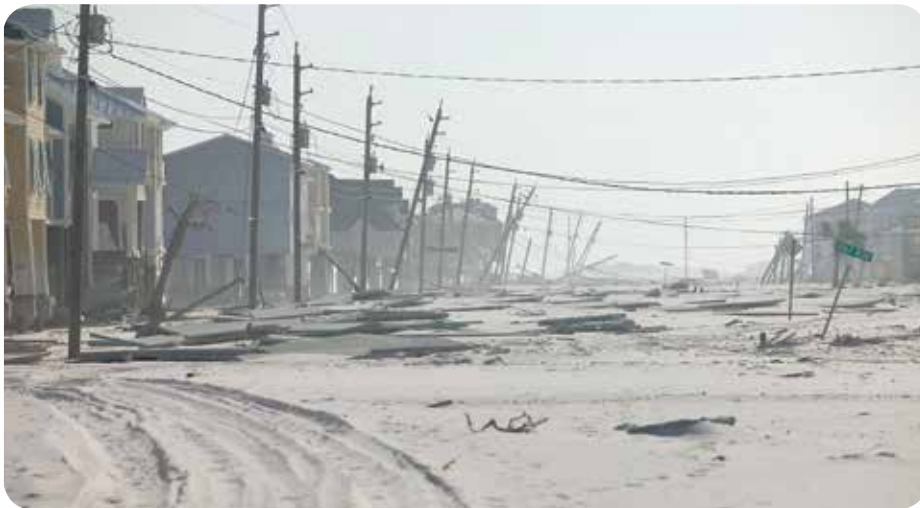
HURRICANE EVACUATIONS

High winds and the potential for severe flooding make it unsafe and uncomfortable for people to be in an area that is impacted by a hurricane. In the case of a storm threatening our area, a special visitor evacuation may be issued. Officials want visitors to have plenty of time to get out of harm's way as well as to not impede the movement of local residents in the event of a full evacuation. There is no need to panic, but visitors are urged to follow emergency directives in a timely manner, to avoid delays and leave safely.

IF YOU IGNORE AN EVACUATION ORDER

Visitors and Residents should understand that you will be jeopardizing your life and those of your family members. There might be a time period during the storm or incident that you will be on your own.

Emergency and rescue personnel will not be able to respond to a call for assistance until after the danger of the storm has passed. After the storm, emergency and rescue personnel may not be able to immediately respond to your area because of damage, road debris and downed trees.



Boaters also need to respond to the warning quickly because of the extra time needed to secure watercraft.

HOW WILL I KNOW?

In Florida, hurricane season is June 1 through November 30, though storms have formed before and after the official season. Modern-day forecasting provides plenty of time to safeguard people and property. While often not a top priority while on vacation, it is important to monitor the local media or official weather sites:

Santa Rosa County:
www.santarosa.fl.gov

National Weather Service:
www.nws.noaa.gov

National Hurricane Center:
www.nhc.noaa.gov

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Staying at a shelter is also available to visitors. However, shelters are crowded, uncomfortable and noisy. A shelter will not provide the comforts of a hotel, and should be used as a last resort. Consider staying in a hotel or with family or friends that are located outside an evacuation zone.

It is important to be prepared and know ahead of time where the shelters are. Take a moment to look at the fold out map found on the last page of this

guide to determine where your vacation accommodations and shelters are located. Shelter openings may vary with each emergency. Do not go to a shelter until you have been notified that it is open. We will advise all media outlets of shelter locations and opening times and will activate the Citizen Information Center phone at 850-983-INFO (4636). You will be required to register at the time you enter a shelter. See page 42 for more information about sheltering in Santa Rosa County, including what to bring.

If the threat is not severe, you may wish to stay in a more northern location of the county. For local accommodation information, contact the Santa Rosa County Tourist Development Council at 1-800-480-7263, (850) 939-2691 or on the web at www.floridabeachestorivers.com. Other parts of Florida not in the storm's forecasted track may also be an option. Call Visit Florida at (800) 287-8598 to locate lodging in safe areas.

WHEN CAN VISITORS RETURN?

Once the storm passes, officials will assess damage and safety. If the storm has had little or no impact on the infrastructure, visitors should be able to return quickly, possibly the next day.

If you need transportation to a shelter, call the Santa Rosa County Citizen Information Center at (850)983-INFO (4636). Phones will be manned during major disasters.